



***17TH VOORBURG MEETING: SESSION ON
INFORMATION SOCIETY STATISTICS***

**OECD WORK ON ICT AND BUSINESS
PERFORMANCE: THE ROLE OF DATA
LINKING**

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This paper

- Briefly discusses OECD's involvement in work on ICT and economic performance.
- Gives an overview of the current OECD work in this area, notably that on data linking.
- Examines the implications for statistics and statistical offices.

Recent OECD work on ICT and growth:

- The OECD work responded to a request from the OECD ministerial meeting in 1999:
 - What caused the rise in growth disparities in the OECD area?
 - Is there anything new to economic growth, e.g. what is the role of ICT?
 - Which policies can strengthen growth performance?
 - Final report was published in August 2001: *A New Economy: Beyond the Hype*.

Recent OECD work on ICT and growth:

- The work pointed to an important role for ICT:
 - ICT made a large contribution to overall investment;
 - The ICT producing sector was an important source of technological progress and productivity growth;
 - Some sectors that use ICT have experienced stronger productivity growth.
 - Most of the analysis was carried out at the macro-economic and sectoral level.
 - Many questions remain, that can only be addressed by micro-economic analysis, i.e. data linking.

New project on ICT and business performance

- Work directly with statistical offices, currently 13/14 countries, and through 2 OECD working parties (SWIC and WPIIS).
- Focus on two key questions:
 - Why does the uptake of ICT differ between firms, and what are the differences between countries?
 - What are the impacts of ICT at the firm level, and which factors determine these impacts?
- Work should lead to new empirical findings, but also to conclusions that are relevant to OECD policy makers.

The data

- Two types of sources:
 - Longitudinal databases, that allow firms to be tracked over time;
 - Linked datasets, e.g. linked data from industrial surveys and surveys of ICT use by businesses.
- In practice, large range of sources being used:
 - ICT and e-commerce surveys;
 - Innovation surveys;
 - Surveys of technology use;
 - R&D surveys;
 - Special surveys, e.g. on organisational change.

The method

- OECD work draws on the work carried out in countries:
 - Firm-level data are confidential - they can not be used outside statistical offices.
 - OECD acts as a forum for discussion, encourages comparative and joint studies between different countries, and synthesises results for policy makers.
- There is growing scope for comparative work:
 - Data are now more comparable, e.g. ICT surveys;
 - As countries use several different methods, best practices are being shared.

Why is micro analysis of growing importance?

- Unlike analysis at higher levels of analysis, it can point to many “soft” factors that are important for growth, such as organisational change, skills, management and ownership changes.
- It can show the enormous degree of churning that is going on in the economy, which is often hidden at higher levels of aggregation.
- It helps point to policy findings that are essential for good policy, but that might have escaped notice otherwise - e.g. US/Europe differences in firm creation.

But it presents a challenge to statistical offices

- Only few statistical offices have developed longitudinal databases that can track firms over time - the development of integrated business registers may allow this to happen in more countries.
- The demands of longitudinal databases and data linking may not yet receive sufficient attention in the work of statistical offices - common firm identifiers and shared samples become more important.

It also presents a potential for statistical offices

- Data linking may offer a new potential for statistical offices to increase the relevance of statistics for policy makers - but this requires more attention for analytical work within and with statistical offices.
- There is much scope to share best practices in data linking and longitudinal databases.
- Analytical work with the surveys also enables feedback into statistical development - e.g. on questions that appear particularly relevant for analysts.